



**Strengthening Neighborhoods  
Facilitating Recovery**

# **HOUSING CODE ENFORCEMENT**

**A Handbook for New Orleans Residents**



The City of New Orleans

This handbook has been edited for readability by the  
Greater New Orleans Literacy Alliance

## Introduction to this Handbook

The rehabilitation of our property is vital to the recovery of New Orleans. As the City rebuilds, it is essential that all residents and businesses clean and maintain their property. This is especially true for unoccupied properties that deteriorate more easily over time.

This handbook explains the City's standards for unoccupied properties, how the administrative hearing process works, how to get a house back into compliance and the rights and responsibilities of property owners.

Code Enforcement is conducting inspections of neighborhoods throughout the City to identify properties that violate the City's building standards. Inspectors are looking at building exteriors, roofs, yards, pools, foundations, gutting and other items.

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## An Overview of the Code Enforcement Process

If an inspector determines that a property violates the City's housing standards, the owner will receive a Notice of Violation. The notice is mailed to the owner at the address on record with the Assessor's office and is posted on the property. Notice is also placed in the Times Picayune and the City's website, [www.cityofno.com](http://www.cityofno.com).

The notice lists the specific violations observed and gives a hearing date. At the hearing, the City determines whether the property is innocent or guilty of being a public nuisance, blight, or both. If the property is declared either a public nuisance or blight, daily fines and other penalties can be assessed.

The following is an outline of what happens before and after a hearing and the property owner's rights and responsibilities at each phase.

### 1. Pre-Hearing

An inspector will reinspect the property before a hearing. If the inspector notes that violations have been addressed the case will be dismissed at the hearing.

If the owner corrects the violation or demolishes the property, proof should be received by the Code Enforcement Department at least 10 days before the hearing.

Extensions are not typically granted prior to a hearing as the Hearing Officer wants to see that the owner has made progress towards addressing the violations. Exceptions can be made and will be assessed on a case by case basis. Please call 658-4301 for more information.

### 2. The Administrative Hearing

An Administrative Hearing Officer, who is independent of the City, presides over a hearing. Based on the evidence presented, they determine whether:

- (a) The property is guilty of being a public nuisance or blight,
- (b) An extension should be given to complete repairs or
- (c) The case should be dismissed

The City presents the evidence against the owner and neighbors are allowed to offer testimony. The property owner has the right to be represented by an attorney, present evidence, introduce witnesses, and question city inspectors under oath.

If a property owner has made repairs, they should bring photographs and copies of contracts to the hearing. If they cannot attend the hearing, a representative **that has been given power of attorney** can attend in their place.

### 3. Results from an Administrative Hearing

The Administrative Hearing Officer will decide the disposition of the case at the hearing. If the property is declared guilty of allowing a public nuisance and/or blighted property, the Hearing Officer will issue a one time fine ranging from \$100 to \$500 and daily fines of \$100 to \$500.

If a property is found guilty of being a public nuisance and/or blight, the owner needs to bring the property into compliance within 30 days. The owner should contact Code Enforcement as soon as the repairs have been made (658-4301).

If the owner does not contact Code Enforcement or no repairs have been made, liens in the amount listed on the judgement will be placed on the ad valorem tax bill for the property.

If the property is found to be a public nuisance the City can remove the violations at the owners expense or move to demolish the property.

If the property is found guilty of being blighted and repairs are not made, the City can move to expropriate the property or sell it at a City Auction.

#### 4. Appeals

After a final judgment is issued, a property owner has thirty (30) days to appeal.

Appeals must be made to the Civil District Court.

## Definition of Public Nuisance

A property can be considered a public nuisance if:

- There is a significant amount of trash or garbage on the lot.
- There are plants or weeds above 18 inches.
- There are abandoned automobiles, building material, discarded appliances, machinery or furnishing.
- It could be a hazard to children because of the condition of its foundation, the condition of the slab, abandoned machinery, unsecured building materials, uncovered holes or uncovered excavation.
- There are conditions that could allow vermin infestation.
- There are objects that can hold standing water.

## Definition of Blight

A property can be considered a blight if:

- There are unresolved code violations for unsafe, unsanitary or unhealthy conditions.
- It has been declared a fire hazard.
- It is lacking in facilities or equipment required by the Housing Code of the City of New Orleans.
- It has been deemed "demolition by neglect" pursuant to section 84-108 or 84-208 of the City Code.
- It has a substantial negative impact on the health, safety, or economic vitality of a neighborhood.
- It is a vacant lot that is abandoned, does not meet the requirements of the City Code or has been adjudicated.
- There is a vermin infestation.

# The City's Housing Requirements

This section explains the City's housing standards. If you get your property up to these standards, contact Code Enforcement (658-4301).

## Section I: Outside Walls and Features

### Outside Surfaces

- All wood surfaces on the outside of the house need to be painted or covered with a protective treatment. This doesn't apply to decay-resistant woods.
- Paint that is peeling, flaking or chipped has to be taken off and repainted.
- All metal surfaces must be coated to prevent rust. If they have rusted, the rust needs to be removed and they need to be coated.

### Load Bearing Structures

- These are the parts of the house such as rafters, beams and load bearing walls that carry most of the weight of the house.
- Must be in good condition and able to support the weight of a house.
- No significant termite damage.
- Must meet the manufacturer's standards for installation, meaning they must be level, plumb, and sturdy.



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### Foundation Walls

- The foundation walls must be level and plumb.
- They cannot have large cracks or breaks.
- They must keep out rodents and other pests.
- Space underneath a raised house must be free of debris.
- The foundation cannot have any rotted columns or missing or leaning piers. The foundation cannot be sagging or breaking.
- Concrete cannot be crumbling or cracking.

### Outside Walls

- The outside walls must be level and plumb.
- The exterior walls must be free from large holes, breaks and loose or rotting materials.
- The walls must prevent water and wind from entering the house.
- The walls must have a protective finish, such as paint or siding.
- The walls must have an exterior finish and coating that makes them water tight.

### Decorative Features

- Cornices, belt courses, corbels, terra cotta trim, wall facings and other decorative features must be in good repair.
- They must be properly secured and anchored to the house.
- They cannot be leaning or falling off of a house.
- They cannot have deterioration that creates sharp or protruding parts.
- They have to be painted or have protective treatment.
- If the decorative features are removed, the interior framing of the house cannot be exposed.

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### House Numbers

- Your house numbers must be visible from the street.
- The numbers must contrast with their background.
- The numbers must be in Arabic numerals or alphabet letters.
- The numbers must be a minimum of four inches high with a stroke width of .5 inches.

## Section II: Roofs

### Roofs

- The roof cannot allow rain or wind to enter into the house.
- The roof cannot have broken or loose or missing materials.
- Shingles, flashing, felt paper and tiles must be in good condition.
- The roof must not have termite damage.
- Roof drains, gutters and downspouts must be in good repair and cannot be blocked. Gutters cannot allow standing water because this allows mosquitoes to breed.
- Roof water has to drain towards the street and cannot drain onto adjacent property. Water can't drain under your house because this weakens the foundation.

### Chimneys

- Chimneys and similar structures must be safe and in good repair.
- None of the material can be falling off or crumbling.
- The metal of a chimney cannot be touching any wood because this could start a fire. If you don't want to fix a chimney you can remove it. If you do this you have to cap off the opening to prevent water from entering your house.

## Part III: Yards and Lots

### Trash

- All trash outside of your house must be in a trash can

or garbage bag.

- Containers in the yard that can hold water must be empty and turned over.

### Grading and Drainage

- Water from your property has to drain towards the street. It cannot drain onto your neighbor's property or under your house.
- Your property must drain in a way that prevents standing water from accumulating.
- The fill of your lot must be maintained and has to be replaced when erosion occurs.

### Grass, Weeds and Trees

- Yards cannot have weeds or grass taller than 18 inches.
- You have to mow the grass along sidewalks and curbs.
- You cannot blow grass onto city property (such as a street) and leave it there.
- Dead trees must be removed from your property.
- Poison oak, poison ivy and other nuisance plants cannot grow on your property or sidewalk.

### Sidewalks

- Owners must maintain their sidewalks. Private companies are responsible for damage done during their work. You are responsible for maintaining the sidewalk in all other situations.
- The sidewalks cannot have uneven surfaces or be blocked.
- Grass or weeds must be less than 18 inches tall.
- A permit is required before you put any construction materials or dumpsters onto sidewalks or streets. This permit is obtained through the Public Works Department (658-8000).

**Rodents**

- All rodent harborages on the premises must be removed. You must remove the problem that caused the infestation. This may mean clearing debris or putting mesh over vents.

**Accessory structures: Garages, Sheds, Fences and Free Standing Walls**

- They cannot have excessive deterioration that might cause them to fall apart.
- The walls of the structures must be plumb and level.
- There cannot be any loose pieces that might come off during inclement weather.
- These structures must be painted or covered with protective treatments.

**Part IV: Other Structures on Lot****Stairways, Steps, Decks, Porches and Balconies**

- These structures must not be in danger of collapsing. Wood cannot be significantly weakened, damaged or deteriorating. They have to be anchored to the house and they must still be able to perform designed function.
- Stairways must not be blocked.
- Steps must not be missing.

**Handrails and Guardrails**

- They must be firmly fastened and capable of supporting normal loads. Wood cannot be deteriorated.

- They must be the proper height.
- They must be secured and anchored to the building.

**Motor Vehicles**

- You must not have inoperative or unlicensed vehicles on your property except in an enclosed space.
- You must not repair, strip or dismantle a vehicle on your property.
- You cannot paint a vehicle on a residential property.

**Swimming pools**

- Pools, hot tubs and spas must either be in working condition with clean, circulating water, or drained and filled.
- Pools, hot tubs and spas must be surrounded by a five foot high fence.
- Pool gates must to be self closing and self latching

**Refrigerators**

- Outdoor iceboxes and refrigerators must be able to be opened from the inside and cannot have airtight doors that can't be opened from the inside. This is a hazard to children.
- A refrigerator left in a yard must have its snap lock or doors removed.

**Part V: Doors and Windows****Securing your property**

- You must repair, replace or properly board all broken windows and doors
- Windows and doors must be boarded from the outside. The board must completely fit within the window frame.

## Doors

- Door assemblies and door hardware must not have significant deterioration.
- Screens must not have large tears.
- Glass doors must not be broken.
- All doors must have working locks.
- A door must properly fit its door frame.

## Window, skylight and door frames

- Must be in good condition and weather tight.
- Must prevent water and air entry.
- Windows must be operable.
- Windows that open must have locks.
- Windows cannot have any panes missing or broken, or they must be properly boarded.
- Door frames have to be in good working order.
- Door frames have to be level and plumb.
- Door frames cannot have extensive deterioration.

## Insect Screens

- A window or opening used for ventilation must have a screen. The screen must have no less than 16 meshes per inch.
- Screens must not have large tears.



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# How to Find People To Make the Repairs

## Contractors

A good way to find a contractor is to ask friends for recommendations. It is also easy to find one by going to the State's Licensing Board of Contractor's website:

[www.lslbc.louisiana.gov](http://www.lslbc.louisiana.gov)

Click on "Find a Contractor."

Click on "Search by City/Town of Contractor" to search by city.

Click on "Search by Type of Contractor" to search by type. After that, click on "Home Improvement" for small jobs, or click on "Commercial" to search by the type of work, such as roofing.

## Protecting Yourself From Contractor Fraud

- Do not give money up front.
- Sign a written contract that states every task that the contractor will complete.
- Ask for proof of insurance. The best way to do this is to ask for a certificate of general liability insurance with the homeowner's name listed as a certificate holder. With this document, the insurance company will contact the homeowner if the contractor cancels his policy.
- Check the contractor's references. You can also go to the Better Business Bureau website to see if any complaints have been filed against them: [www.neworleans.bbb.org](http://www.neworleans.bbb.org)
- Keep all receipts for anything related to the contractor's work.

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## Swimming Pools

The Better Business Bureau website has a list of companies that can service or repair your pool:

[www.neworleans.bbb.org](http://www.neworleans.bbb.org)

Click on "List of Members" and go to "Swimming Pool Service & Repair."

## Assistance from Non Profits

There are several non profits that are assisting elderly, low income and disabled residents with home repairs. The amount of assistance they can offer depends on their resources at the time.

- ACORN (504) 943-0044
- Providence Community Housing (504) 821-7222
- EFCA Crisis Response (985) 893-0218
- Rebuilding Together (504) 947-0038
- Hands On (504) 483-7041
- Operation Helping Hands (504) 895-5439
- Phoenix of New Orleans (504) 342-4399
- Trinity Christian Fellowship (504) 482-7822
- Neighborhood Housing Services (504) 899-5900

## Useful City Numbers

Code Enforcement Department  
(504) 658-4300 (to report a blighted property)  
(504) 658-4301 (to discuss your case if you received a Notice of Violation)

Department of Public Works  
(504) 658-4000

Safety and Permits Department  
(504) 658-7130

Mayor's Office of Public Advocacy  
(504) 658-4000

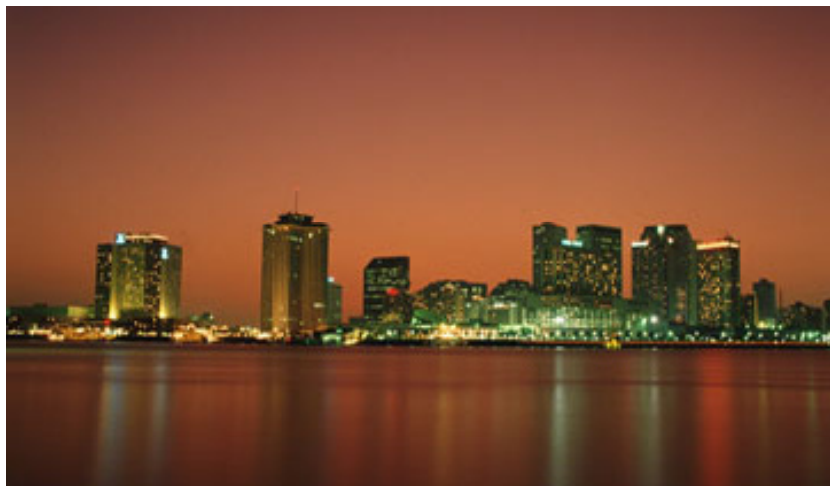
New Orleans Redevelopment Authority (NORA)  
(504) 658-4400

Health Department  
(504) 658-2500

Historic District Landmark Commission  
(504) 658-7040

City's 311 System  
(504) 658-4000

Rodent, Mosquito and Termite Control  
(504) 658-2400



## The City of New Orleans Housing Code

This booklet is intended to provide highlights to the City's code in easy-to-understand language. Although every attempt has been made to maintain accuracy, this is merely a brief summary of applicable laws or regulations for quick reference.

The City's housing laws also follows the ICC's International Building Code, the International Residential Code for One and Two Family Dwellings and amendments to these codes that are in Chapter 1 of the City Code.

Anyone who makes repairs to a home should have an understanding of these documents and must meet any code requirements not discussed in this handbook. The Code Enforcement Department's unoccupied housing policy is stated in Chapter 28 of the City's Code.

## Liability

Although this booklet has offered suggestions for how to find contractors, non profit agencies and private businesses involved in home repairs, the City does not accept any legal responsibility for the work or actions of any contractor, non profit agency, private repair business or their workers.



The City of New Orleans

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